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C O N F I D E N T I A L SOFIA 000218

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EUN](#) [NATO](#) [XH](#) [BU](#)

SUBJECT: BULGARIA SEEKS GUIDANCE ON HOSTING NEXT V-10  
MEETING

REF: SOFIA 114

Classified By: DCM Alex Karagiannis, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) This is a guidance request. Please see paragraph 6.

¶2. (C) Foreign Minister Kalvin informally offered on January 25 to host a meeting of Vilnius-10 countries in Sofia (reftel). The MFA remains interested in hosting the event, but is reluctant formally to accept or discuss dates while the meeting format, topics, and participation remain unclear.

¶3. (C) The Bulgarians would like to invite the Western Balkan countries and DAS DiCarlo, as was the case in Ljubljana. Excluding the Western Balkans would send the wrong signal to these countries as the Kosovo final status process moves forward, according to MFA Security Policy Director Petyo Petev, who represented Bulgaria at the meeting in Ljubljana. The Bulgarian preference is for the format to be similar to Ljubljana: a working dinner on the eve of the meeting, followed by a working breakfast, formal meeting at the MFA, and finally a working lunch. The dinner and breakfast could be breakout sessions for the V-10 and Western Balkans, hosted by PDAS Volker and DAS DiCarlo respectively, as we understand was the case in Ljubljana.

¶4. (C) We suggest the following core agenda items; the Bulgarians will accept almost anything we suggest, but may want to add a few items of their own:

Energy Security - This should be our "headline" issue -- specifically, encouraging V-10 nations to speak with a common voice for a strong EU energy policy.

Black Sea Security - Bulgarians and Romanians often speak of "EU on the Black Sea" -- discussions could highlight the implications of their recent accession, while emphasizing the continuing need for engagement with Georgia and the need for a workable framework for multilateral security cooperation (such as Operation Black Sea Harmony).

Afghanistan - We should encourage participants to discuss how Allies can better cooperate in ways that will allow them to lift caveats and strengthen ISAF, e.g., by sharing equipment and experience. Bulgaria, for example, has staff officers in Hungary's Afghan PRT and appears close to an equipment-sharing agreement with Italy that will allow it to lift caveats in their joint area of operations.

Kosovo - Particularly if Western Balkan nations are invited, discussion of Kosovo and Euro-Atlantic integration of the Balkans will be high on the agenda. The Bulgarians will no-doubt want to add this to the agenda in any case.

15. (SBU) Timing: We suggest proposing to the Bulgarians that they host the V-10 meeting before the next NATO ministerial in late April. We understand PDAS Volker and DAS DiCarlo will be available the weeks of April 9 and April 16. The Bulgarians have indicated that at least the first half of the week of April 9 would not be feasible (they will be streaming back to Sofia from the Orthodox Easter Monday holiday on April 9).

Guidance request:

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16. (C) We request Department guidance on the meeting's proposed agenda, format, and the availability of Washington participants. The Bulgarian MFA has asked for this information prior to making a final decision whether to host the meeting. We understand the Slovenes will host an informal meeting of V-10 embassies in Washington on February 23, and we will encourage the Bulgarians to offer formally to host the meeting at that time.

BEYRLE